

piece of rural Tennessee into a beautiful place to live, work, and raise a family.

Congratulations are in order to the members of the Houston County Historical Society and, most importantly, to the citizens of Houston County. I ask my colleagues to join with me in wishing them another 150 years of progress and prosperity.●

REMEMBERING HELEN EUGENIA HAGAN

● Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, today I rise to recognize Ms. Helen Eugenia Hagan, a remarkable pianist and pioneer for BIPOC women in music.

Her passion for performing began at a young age, and Ms. Hagan became the organist for the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church when she was around 11 years old. Ms. Hagan's talents earned her a spot at the Yale School of Music. In 1912, she was the first African-American woman to graduate from Yale University.

At the request of General John J. Pershing, Ms. Hagan traveled to France during World War I as part of a group led by preacher Henry H. Proctor. Ms. Hagan was the only Black performing artist sent to France during the war. Continuing to break barriers, she was also the first Black pianist to perform a recital at a New York concert venue. Ms. Hagan's compositions and concert work received outstanding praise. The then-Dean of the Yale School of Music credited Ms. Hagan with "rare promise," and critics commended her creativity and originality.

Struggling to find work during the Great Depression, she took graduate-level courses at Columbia University's Teachers College while still giving performances. In 1933, Ms. Hagan took a teaching position at Bishop College in Texas and gave private music lessons in New York. She remained committed to musical composition, performance, and education until her passing in 1964.

On February 6, 2021, the New Haven Symphony Orchestra will honor Ms. Hagan with a History Award. Alongside Yale University, the symphony has been dedicated to sharing the life story of this incredible woman, who performed her "Piano Concerto in C minor" with them in 1916. This award is a tribute to Ms. Hagan's extraordinary legacy, which will be enduring.

I applaud her many accomplishments and hope my colleagues will join me in remembering Ms. Helen Eugenia Hagan.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 4:17 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 335. An act to provide for an exception to a limitation against appointment of per-

sons as Secretary of Defense within seven years of relief from active duty as a regular commissioned officer of the Armed Forces.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 5:58 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HOYER) has signed the following enrolled bill:

H.R. 335. An act to provide for an exception to a limitation against appointment of persons as Secretary of Defense within seven years of relief from active duty as a regular commissioned officer of the Armed Forces.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-19. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the status of Foreign Terrorist Organizations designation of Lashkar/ISIL (OSS-2021-0015); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-20. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the status of Foreign Terrorist Organizations designation of Harakat (OSS-2021-0010); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-21. A communication from the Senior Bureau Official, Bureau of Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the status of Foreign Terrorist Organizations designation of Ansarallah (OSS-2021-0011); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. INHOFE, from the Committee on Armed Services, without amendment:

S. 12. A bill to provide for an exception to a limitation against appointment of persons as Secretary of Defense within seven years of relief from active duty as a regular commissioned officer of the Armed Forces.

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. INHOFE for the Committee on Armed Services.

*Lloyd James Austin, of Georgia, to be Secretary of Defense.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I have a request for one committee to meet during today's session of the Senate. It

has the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committee is authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, January 21, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a closed hearing.

NOMINATION OF ANTONY BLINKEN

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I come to the floor today to urge the swift confirmation for Tony Blinken to be the Secretary of State.

Like we saw with Avril Haines yesterday and moving toward Lloyd Austin today, we need to hold a floor vote on Mr. Blinken's nomination urgently.

Mr. Blinken is well known to the Senate, having previously been confirmed as Deputy Secretary of State, having served as the Deputy National Security Advisor and, of course, as the staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee before that.

He is superbly qualified to be the Secretary of State, and his knowledge and thoughtfulness were on display during 5 hours of testimony earlier this week. And since then, he has been asked to respond to hundreds of questions. As a matter of fact, he has had an inordinate number of questions that have been put to him for the record. He had nearly over half a hundred before his hearing. He has had from a couple of our colleagues nearly 600 questions, including multiple parts to those questions. And to my knowledge, he has largely answered them all, notwithstanding the size, the magnitude of it.

Now, I have been, since I arrived in this institution, one of the big advocates of the prerogatives of each and every individual Senator and of the institution. So I take a back step to no one, but there is a difference between prerogatives and prerogatives that are abused, which, in essence, are for the purpose of not seeking information but for the purpose of delaying a nomination.

Now, I appreciate that Senator RISCH, the present chairman of the committee, has been working with me to try to accelerate Mr. Blinken's nomination to the floor, but I would ask my colleagues, particularly those on the committee, to join him and I in an effort to bring one of the important national security positions in our government to the floor for a vote.

I don't think we should be leaving this weekend without a vote for the Secretary of State.

He is the right person to repair and restore our alliances, to rebuild and renew the State Department, to reinvigorate the relationship between the Department and Congress—something